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AUTHOR Reeseg, Carol lyn
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ABSTRACT

A survey was conducted of junior and senior high school area teachers in the Rahway (New Jersey) public school system to determine what effect, if any, the two reading courses required by the state for all prospective teachers have had on the reading skills they teach. The questionnaire was composed of 80 multiple-choice statements and administered to 120 teachers. Twenty-seven were returned complete and in usable form. Results were compared to see if there were any distinct differences in the reading skills taught by two groups of teachers: those with 10 or more years of experience, and those with 5 or fewer years of experience. It was determined that teachers with 10 or more years of experience taught fewer reading skills than did teachers with 5 or fewer years' experience. The findings suggest that educators who have been exposed to reading education do teach the necessary reading skills more frequently than do those who have not been similarly taught. The findings also suggest that over time, the teaching of more reading skills should lead to improved student achievement. (CRH)

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A Quantitative Study Of The Effect Of Required Reading Courses On The Teaching Of Reading Skills

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by
Carol lyn Reeseg
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Submitted In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

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ABSTRACT

A survey was administered to content area teachers to see what effect, if any, the two required reading courses have on the reading skills they teach in their classes. Results were tallied and compared to see if there were any distinct differences in the reading skills taught by the two groups of teachers: one of which had had ten or more years of teaching experience, and second of which had five or fewer years of teaching experience. Analysis of results indicated that educators that have been exposed to reading education do teach the necessary reading skills more frequently than those who have not been similarly taught.

The inability of many of our students to read (considering both quantity and quality) is a topic of great concern to many educators today. To entrust the teaching of reading to the elementary teacher and the elementary schools and to expect transfer of learning to occur when a student encounters a History, Science or Math text is being blind to the educational process. All content area teachers must become teachers of reading to help our students succeed.

Strickler (1957) points out several tasks for the content area teacher to aid students in:

1. the vocabulary peculiar to the field of study.
2. the ability to preview reading material.
3. developing the ability to read fluently and critically.
4. developing the ability to assimilate reading material.

Strickler (1957) pointed out that most secondary school teachers acknowledge the existence of a reading problem.

Herber (1970) concluded that teachers recognized the skills that were lacking but admitted that they did not know how to make the students aware of and use specific skills.

Smith and Otto (1969) also pointed out that the lack of reading knowledge was an obstacle to teachers.

Burnette's observations (1966) were that most secondary teachers have had little if any training in the teaching of reading.

Rosewell (1973) indicates that while study skills may constitute the body of content, the secondary teacher sees himself (her) as a specialist with a body of content related to a specific academic discipline.. He also stated

that another obstacle for teachers was the concern for the covering of content, and that they resist the fact that they have a responsibility to teach reading.

In order to remedy this situation many teacher training institutes are training teachers in reading education. Yet, we still are finding that our reading problems are persisting.

Braam and Roehm (1964) concluded that the thinking of reading experts is not being transmitted to content area teachers.

Early (1973) indicates that even though teachers are aware of the expected range of reading abilities, they are not any more willing to teach reading skills.

The question that arises is are these teachers that are being trained in reading education teaching the necessary reading skills more frequently than those teachers that have not had this training?

Hypothesis

The fact that educators have been exposed to reading education does not necessarily suggest that they are going to teach the skills.

Definitions

Content Area Teacher- A teacher that teaches soley in one academic principle. (i.e. Math,History, Science, English)

Reading Skills- Those skills needed for understanding in each of the academic principles.

Assumptions

It is assumed that the participants will answer the questions truthfully.

Limitations

The results are limited by the responses of the participants.

The data will be gathered by a questionaire that has not been validated.

Delimitations

The data gathered will be from teachers in one specific school system.

Procedures

Content area teachers in the Senior and Junior High Schools of the Rahway Public School System were asked to participate in this study with the purpose of sampling a cross section of teachers with different educational backgrounds. A questionaire composed of eighty multiple choice statements was administered to 120 content area teachers with 27 completed and usable in this study. Results were tallied and compared to see if there any distinct differences in the reading skills taught by the two groups of teachers: one of which has had ten or more years of teaching experience, and second of which had five or fewer years of teaching experience. While all teachers will be surveyed, only the results from those that meet these limits will be utilized in the final study.

Results

In Table I the mean scores of the two groups studied are compared. Statistical formulas were utilized to

determine whetherany difference existed between the content area reading skills taught by both groups.

TABLE I

Comparison of Mean Scores of
Teachers Teaching 5 Years or Less Vs
Teachers Teaching 10 Years or More

Subjects	Questionaire Mean Score Related To Reading Skills Taught	S.D.	t
Teachers with 5 years or less experience	179.38	36.96	41.6
Teachers with 10 years or more experience	161.84	80.49	

Significance .01

Out of a total of 320 possible points the mean computed for teachers teaching 10 years or more was 161.84. Teachers with 5 years or less experience had a higher mean score of 179.38. Also it should be noted that teachers teaching less than five years had scores that were far less variable.

Conclusions

After examining the results it can be concluded that educators that have been exposed to reading education do teach the necessary reading skills more frequently than those who have not been similarly taught. The implication of this finding suggests that more appropriate instruction, i.e. related to learning, is being offered to students by teachers trained in two courses of reading -- a requirement for all newly certified teachers and that this should result in improved student achievement in time.

Although the results are positive and in favor of such training, it should be noted that the results might have been even more significantly different had it been possible to match teachers in each sample according to the content they taught. The ten year plus teacher sample comprised a larger number of English teachers than other subject areas. It would appear that the English teacher traditionally has been involved with reading (and the total language arts) over the years even though not trained specifically in this area and so is most likely to utilize the skills enumerated in the survey.

REVIEW OF REALTED LITERATURE IN CONTENT AREA READING

Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary defined the ability to read as understanding the meaning of written or printed matter. Reading is the tool we use to solve problems, locate and acquire information, for enjoyment, interest and recreation. The ability to read opens up a world of knowledge to us, diverse in both subject and degrees of intensity.

For the elementary school child reading skills are taught in daily reading periods so that they will take these skills and incorporate them in their daily lives. At the secondary level there arefew if any daily reading periods. Yet, we find that reading is an integral and necessary part of learning in the secondary classroom. Sochor (1953) points out that more and more teachers are becoming aware of the fact that reading is an important part of learning and that the content becomes more difficult if the skills characteristic of and necessary for the subject are not developed.

Investigation into the reading process has told us:

1. Reading is not a general ability but many complex skills and abilities. (Fay 1950)
2. While there are reading skills common to various areas of curriculum there is enough difference in the nature and pattern of the skills characteristic of each area to warrant specific instruction. (Shores-1940, Humber-1942, Robinson and Hall-1941) Sochor (1953) suggested that the following skills are basic to reading comprehension in all areas:
   a. interpreting facts acurately
   b. grasping the general idea/meaning of selection

c. identifying the sequence whether chronological, logical or arbitrary
d. organizing ideas including: recognizing central theme, main idea, details related to the main idea and the coordinate value of main points and details.
e. reaching a conclusion
f. solving problems (personal, social, scientific or mathematic)
g. evaluating ideas for relevancy
h. interpreting maps, graphs, diagrams
i. following directions

3. Reading comprehension in any content area can be broken down into many skills and abilities. (Shore-1940, Humber-1942, Fay-1950, Sochor-1950 and Maney-1952)
Ruth Strang (1955) pointed out that reading instruction was needed in every science class due to the technical vocabulary, and the problems related to the reading of formulas, diagrams and directions.

4. The ability to interpret what is read requires a different pattern of comprehension skills in each field. (Bond-1938, Swenson-1938, Shores-1940, Humber-1942 and Fay 1950)
Ruth Strang states that all students will profit by instruction in how to approach a science reading assignment. Also, habits of thinking must be applied when reading science. Lastly, the problem solving method is important in the understanding of science.

5. A student may be able to comprehend satisfactorily in one content area and not another. (Robinson and Hall 1941 and Humber-1942)

Leo Fay (1950) concluded that when the effects of mental and chronological ages were controlled:

-superior readers achieved no better in math than inferior readers for all reading skills.

-superior readers in predicting outcomes, following directions, general comprehension, reading maps, charts and tables achieved better in social studies.

-superior readers in understanding directions and in general comprehension achieved better in science.

-superior readers in predicting outcomes, reading maps, graphs, charts and tables, use of reference books, indices and dictionaries achieved no better in science than inferior readers.

6. The ability to interpret what is read requires different patterns of comprehension skills in each field. (Bond-1938, Swenson-1938, Shores-1940, Humber-1942, Fay-1950)

Sochor (1953) points out that teachers need to know which comprehension skills are peculiar to their field before they can give guidance in the development of reading skills. For example:

Social Studies

a. grasp the general meaning of the selection
b. interpret figurative language
c. understand many abstract and complex ideas
d. locate information
e. organize and summarize
f. discriminate between relevant and irrelevant material
g. differentiate between fact and opinion
h. recognize mood, tone or intent of author

i. interpret maps, graphs, and other pictorial representations

Science

a. note details carefully
b. read analytically
c. interpret formulae, tables, charts, diagrams
d. preform a specific problem
e. follow directions
f. recognize the steps in an experiment
g. visualize what is read
h. identify cause and effect relationships
i. classify ideas

Leo Fay (1953) states that children have to be shown how to read for purpose, how to read maps, graphs, charts and tables, etc. Therefore, the content teacher must include the teaching of skills important for study in their own content area.

Starry (1950) found that the direct teaching of skills resulted in markedly greater improvement for her students.

Francis Curtis (1938) found that the vocabulary of textbooks in secondary science are far to difficult for the pupils they were written for. Margaret Kerr (1949) states that since science and social studies present concepts that are remote in space or content, it is important that reading difficulties do not further complicate the learning process.

Francis Curtis found that:

a. pupils encounter many technical and nontechnical words of which the meanings are unknown.
b. there is insufficient provision in science textbooks for repitition of difficult scientific

terms.

c. too little a percentage of science terms that are introduced into books are defined.

d. too large a percentage of difficult words are nonscientific.

Mallison, Sturm and Patton (1950) found that the textbooks in elementary science are difficult for the average reading ability student in grades four and five. In grade six the textbooks are difficult for the students with less than average reading ability.

Leo Fay (1950) pointed out that study in different curriculum areas presents real problems to the student due to the specialized and technical vocabulary. Due to the fact that study skills develop gradually they should be the concern of teachers at all levels. Fay also tells us that study is incomplete until the student builds the information he possesses into an interrelated structure. Some ideas for this organization to occur are:

a. listing or summarizing ideas or events

b. arranging directions in proper sequence

c. outlining on the basis of relationships (i.e. time, place, general-specific, main and subordinate ideas)

d. classifying information into various categories

e. selecting relevant information

f. making graphical representations

In his presentation to the International Reading Association in 1974 William Palmer suggested three problems to the teaching of reading in the content area. These were:

a. Teachers feel only the reading specialist should solve problems.

b. Teachers believe the best place to start reading instruction is with phonics.

c. Teachers teach only the skills and not their application.

Also suggested were three possible ideas to the teaching of content area reading. These suggestions were:

a. Teach reading as a process not just skills.
b. Build upon linguistics.
c. Bridge the gap between spoken language, printed language and experience.

In May of 1980 the New Jersey Reading Association Reading in the Content Area Committee was formed. Its objective was to learn the needs of the K-12 public school educators in regards to reading in the content area. The information was then made available to the educators and the general public. Some of their findings are listed below:

a. Classroom teachers are concerned about their need for learning strategies to help students with reading comprehension in the content areas.
b. Teachers of subjects gave a high rating to vocabulary development and literal comprehension. (Special Education and Vocational Education)
c. Regardless of years of experience, teachers feel similarly about their needs for texts to teach reading through the content areas.
d. Regardless of years of experience, English and Social Studies are considered to be the subjects where supplementary materials are needed to assist pupils with their reading.
e. Regardless of teaching experience, the need to learn instructional strategies for teaching study skills was felt by all groups.
f. Regardless of years of teaching experience, teachers feel similarly that art and music have low priority for supplementary materials.

g. Of all suggested study skills, teachers feel the greatest need for learning how to teach study strategies such as SQ3R.

h. Regardless of years of experience, all teachers feel a need to learn strategies for teaching all reading comprehension skills in content areas.

The Needs Assessment concluded that information obtained indicated that educators want to learn instructional strategies to improve students' study skills and comprehension skills in content areas. However, they have some negative attitudes about professional development which needs to be reconciled with their desire to learn these strategies. Educators revealed less concern about textbooks, including aids, and supplementary materials for facilitating reading in the content areas.

Early and Herber (1969) reported that one fourth to one third of all research effort goes towards providing the teacher with tested information he or she can apply in the classroom. Without the ideas and suggestions many teachers are at a loss for how to improve reading in the content area.

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YEARS OF TEACHING EXPERIENCE_____ SUBJECT_____

GRADE_____

Check one of the following:
a. always
b. often
c. occasionally
d. seldom
e. never

	a	b	c	d	e
1. I teach functional words like: Cause and Effect					
2. Condition					
3. Contrast					
4. Sequence (Time Related)					
5. Parallel Idea Words					
6. I use structural analysis to help students recognize words.					
7. I develop lessons for derivation of words.					
8. Classification taught by use of derivational meaning of morphemes.					
9. Rules for syllabication are taught separately.					
10. I introduce vocabulary prior to reading experience.					
11. I allow students to skim and scan for own vocabulary.					
12. I present vocabulary words in context of sentences.					
13. I have students produce own sentences using words.					
14. I use configuration as an aid in Visual Word Recognition.					
15. I use syllabication as an aid in Auditory recognition of words.					
16. I encourage establishment of homographic meaning for words.					
17. I establish the different meanings and spellings for homophones.					

	a	b	c	d	e
18. We discuss Figurative Language such as Metaphors					
19. Similes					
20. Personification					
21. Alliteration					
22. Hyperboles					
23. Synonyms					
24. Antonyms					
25. We analyze the structure of sentences.					
26. I teach Grammatical Atttributes (Nouns, Verbs, Prepositions, etc.)					
27. We analyze irregular syntax.					
28. I work on syntax common to my subject area.					
29. I encourage students to proof read for comprehension.					
30. I teach main idea.					
31. I teach topic sentences.					
32. I teach placement of topic sentences.					
33. I teach recall of details.					
34. I teach sequencing.					
35. I teach comparing and contrasting.					
36. I teach the recognition of cause and effect statements.					
37. I teach following directions.					
38. I teach the above mentioned skills on a concept level.					
39. I teach predicting outcomes.					
40. I teach drawing conclusions.					
41. I teach the above mentioned skills on a concept level.					
42. My students work on distinguishing fact from fancy.					
43. My students work on distinguishing fact vs. opinion.					

	a	b	c	d	e
44. My students work on evaluating: Characters					
45. Setting					
46. Plot					
47. Au hor's Purpose					
48. Author's Technique					
49. Propaganda					
50. I teach the above mentioned skills on a concept level.					
51. I develop the theme of a story and establish generalizations about it.					
52. I integrate Critical level skills with students experience.					
53. I use SQ3R or SQ4R.					
54. I devise a Teacher's Task analysis.					
55. I use overviews for chapters/units.					
56. I incorporate Behavioral objectives.					
57. I teach the Process of Reading lessons.					
58. I use a Profundity Scale (Literature)					
59. I have Advanced Organizers.					
60. I have students produce visual aids.					
61. I give many illustrations.					
62. I allow for dramatization.					
63. I use a vocabulary guide.					
64. I use a check off list for vocabulary.					
65. I use directed reading activities.					
66. I use directed Reading Thinking Activities or Directed Reading Activities-Active Comprehension.					
67. I teach horizontal and vertical graph reading.					
68. I teach the use of tables for information.					
69. I use diagrams for establishing inferred information.					

	a	b	c	d	e
70. I teach outlining skills for writing.					
71. I teach outlining skills for reading.					
72. I teach construction of bibliographies.					
73. I encourage dictionary usage.					
74. I encourage encyclopedia usage.					
75. I incorporate Library Science lessons (Card Catalog).					
76. I incorporate Reader's Guide to Periodic Literature in my activities.					
77. I have used at least one readability formula to establish the readability of the classroom text.					
78. Motivation for students includes prior knowledge of subject matter.					
79. I preview my textbooks.					
80. Students approach learning with "Does the author agree with me?" in form of Predictive Motivation.					